

Message Text

SECRET

PAGE 01 SANAA 00559 251014Z

17

ACTION NEA-06

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TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 3485

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S E C R E T SANAA 559

LIMDIS

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: MASS, PFOR, YE, YS

SUBJ: YEMEN VISIT OF MAJOR GENERAL SUMNER

1. MAJOR GENERAL GORDON SUMNER, REGIONAL DIRECTOR FOR NEAR EAST, OFFICE OF DEPUTY ASST SECRETARY OF DEFENSE FOR NESA IN OASD/ISA PAID MOST USEFUL VIIST TO SANAA MARCH 22-24. THANKS TO SENSITIVITY AND COOPERATION OF FONMIN ASNAG, WE WERE ABLE ARRANGE FAIRLY EXTENSIVE CONTACTS FOR GENERAL SUMNER BUT WITHOUT (SO FAR) ANY PUBLICITY.

2. WE BELIEVE VISIT HAS HELPED REASSURE YARG MILITARY AND CIVILIAN LEADERSHIP OVER USG CONCERN FOR YAR'S ABILITY DEFEND ITSELF AGAINST ANY AGGRESSION FROM PDRY. KEY EVENTS OF VISIT WERE: (A) LUNCHEON AT RESIDENCE FOR FONMIN, DEPUTY CIC HAMDI, MINCOMMUNICATIONS SA'ID (B) TWO HOUR BRIEFING AND DISCUSSION MARCH 23 WITH THREE MILITARY LEADERS--CIC IRYANI, DEP CIC HAMDI AND COS MASWARI. AMERICAN PARTICIPANTS WERE AMBASSADOR, GENERAL SUMNER, DCM NEWTON AND DATT LTC FIFER FROM JIDDA.

SECRET

SECRET

PAGE 02 SANAA 00559 251014Z

(C) INTIMATE DINNER AT HOUSE COS MASWARI DURING WHICH

FONMIN ASNAG ALSO AGAIN PRESENT. GENERAL AND PARTY ALSO PAID UNPUBLICIZED VISITS TO INFANTRY, ARTILLERY AND PARATROOP SCHOOLS TO OBTAIN PICTURE OF GENERAL STATE OF

(UN)READINESS OF YARG ARMED FORCES.

3. YEMENI HOST DEMONSTRATED IMPRESSIVE WARMTH AND FRANKNESS DURING SUBSTANTIVE DISCUSSIONS TOTALLING TEN HOURS. WHILE REALISTIC ABOUT YEMEN'S SITUATION AND NEEDS THEY PRESENTED THEIR CONCERNS WITH COMPLETE AND SOMETIMES CRITICAL OPENNESS. AS COL. IRYANI EXPLAINED, AFTER CLASHES WITH PDRY IN FALL OF 1972, MILITARY LEADERSHIP DECIDED ON THREE PRIORITY GOALS:

A. SOUTHERN BORDER AREA MUST BE CLEARED OF INFILTRATING PDRY GUERRILLAS.

B. WORN OUT SOVIET WEAPONS MUST BE REPLACED WITH MODERN WESTERN ONES TO ENABLE COUNTRY TO DEFEND ITSELF FROM CONVENTIONAL ATTACK BY HEAVILY ARMED PDRY FORCES AND TO SEAL SOUTHERN BORDER FROM INFILTRATION.

C. MAJOR EFFORT MUST BE MADE IN YAR TO ERADICATE POVERTY AND BACKWARDNESS IN WHICH RADICAL PDRY IDEOLOGIES CAN FLOURISH.

4. ACCORDING IRYANI, YAR ARMED FORCES HAVE LARGELY SUCCEEDED IN FIRST GOAL, BUT LITTLE HAS BEEN ACCOMPLISHED TOWARD ACHIEVEMENT OF SECOND FOR WHICH THEY HAVE RELIED ON SAUDI HELP WITH ACTIVE USG PARTICIPATION. YARG KNOWS SOVIETS WILL NEVER GIVE IT ENOUGH ARMS TO DEFEND ITSELF AGAINST MARXIST PDRY AND IT MUST LOOK ELSEWHERE FOR HELP. LEADERS REALIZE THIS REORIENTATION CAN ONLY BE IMPLEMENTED GRADUALLY, BUT IT IS URGENT TO MAKE START NOW.

5. THREE LEADERS ALSO SHOWED LIVELY APPRECIATION OF STRATEGIC SITUATION IN RED SEA-ARABIAN PENINSULA-INDIAN OCEAN REGION. HAMDI EXPRESSED PARTICULAR CONCERN ABOUT

SECRET

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PAGE 03 SANAA 00559 251014Z

ETHIOPIA WHERE LEFTIST ELEMENTS WERE TAKING ADVANTAGE OF PRESENT UNREST. HE NOTED MANY OF ETHIOPIA'S PROBLEMS WERE COMMON TO YEMEN.

6. IRYANI EMPHASIZED NEED TO COOPERATE WITH SAUDI ARABIA BUT EXPRESSED FEAR THAT LATTER'S EMPHASIS ON RIGID CONSERVATISM AND DOGMATIC RELIGION WAS UNSETTLING TO YEMENI SOCIETY AND WHOLLY INADEQUATE TO COMBAT

MODERN DOCTRINES OF COMMUNISM. YAR FAVORED OPEN SOCIETY
BASED ON DEMOCRACY IN WHICH VARIOUS POINTS OF VIEW WERE
RESPECTED AND RELIGION A PRIVATE MATTER. ONLY BY
MODERNIZING YEMENI SOCIETY AND ITS ECONOMY COULD
RADICAL MARXISM BE PREVENTED FROM GAINING A FOOTHOLD.

7. AMBASSADOR AND GENERAL SUMNER REITERATED OUR CONCERN
FOR YAR'S INTEGRITY AND DEMOCRATIC FORM OF GOVERNMENT,
CONCERN HEIGHTENED BY INCREASING STRATEGIC IMPORTANCE
OF AREA. ALTHOUGH MIDDLE EAST WAR HAD TEMPORARILY
ABSORBED USG DIPLOMATIC ENERGIES, WE WERE NOW
ACTIVELY WORKING ON PROBLEMS OF YEMEN'S DEFENSE NEEDS
AND HOPED TO BE TALKING TO SAUDIS SHORTLY ON JOINT
CONCEPT OF OPERATIONS.
CRAWFORD

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